XI

Piecing together tlie significance of years which have passed is made easier because now Time has not only a body —events and those who shape, and are shaped by them, and a spirit whose character may be looked for in fashions of thought and of behaviour, in mental and spiritual preoccupations; it has also a voice. From nine million wireless sets in nine million homes its voice is heard nightly, giving information, news, entertaining and instructing, preaching even, with different accents yet always the same; the voices of the nine million who listen merged into one voice, their own collective voice echoing back to them.

This voice, silky, persuasive, cultivated, passionless and laughterless, emerging relentlessly from a mechanical instrument, awakened and silenced, swelling and waning, to the adjustment of a switch, ushering in each new year, bidding farewell to each old one, announcing a King's demise and a Government's fall, a new King's enthronement and a new Government's formation, presenting happenings great and small to its immense audience —may it not be regarded as, to use Coriolanus's expression, 'the tongue of the common mouth' ?

Sometimes accidents occur—a commentator on a Naval Review finds himself so overcome with emotion, or otherwise incapacitated, that he can do no more than murmur that there are many ships, all lit-up; forbidden words are spoken, someone inconsequently muttering, 'Mrs. Simpson.' Such accidents are rare, and soon obliterated. Sometimes the voice is

disentangled with difficulty from other voices, not all silky, not all persuasive or genteel; clamorous, angry voices* Yet once found and isolated, it may be listened to without fear of interruption, all discordant sounds silenced. *La voix cest I'homme meme.*

The B.B.C. came to pass silently, invisibly; like a coral reef, cells busily multiplying, until it was a vast structure, a conglomeration of studios, offices, cool passages along which many passed to and fro; a society, with its king and lords and commoners,